

**MINUTES REPORT
BUILDING INDUSTRY OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE (BIOC)
THURSDAY, August 10, 2023**

Committee Members Present

Steve Gabor
Matthew Johnson
Bobby Lyons
Steve Wojcechowkyj

Committee Members Absent

Marc Malanick

Lee County Government Representatives

Tad Delnay, Deputy Building Official
Audra Ennis, Manager, Community Development
Jennifer Harden, Chief, Community Development
Shawn McNulty, Building Official/Deputy DCD Director
Antia Richards, Senior Fiscal Officer
Janet Miller, Recording Secretary
Mikki Rozdolski, Planning Manager

Members of the Public

Phillip Ford, Chair of the Building Industry Association
Kyle Night, Vice President of Operations SW FL - DR Horton Homes

Call to Order/Affidavit

Mr. Steve Gabor called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m. The attorney's office previously reviewed the Notarized Affidavit of Posting and advised staff that it was legally sufficient.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Wojcechowkyj made a motion to approve the June 8, 2023 minutes. Mr. Lyons seconded. The motion was called and carried unanimously.

Revenue/Expense Reports/Fees/Fund Balance Report/Staffing Levels/Levels of Service

Ms. Richards gave an overview of the revenue/expense reports (distributed at the meeting). She noted that the \$15 million that we have budgeted does not include the new positions that were recently approved on August 1, 2023. Staff is still making the final adjustments to the budget for each department accordingly. In reviewing the month to month sheet, Ms. Richards noted that in July 2023 the County had a grand total of \$1,321,260. This is an increase of almost \$300,000.00 from July 2022.

Mr. Gabor asked if staff knew how much the 23 positions would add to the budget.

Ms. Richards stated it would be \$800,000 for the fiscal year and about \$2.5 million for the next fiscal year.

Ms. Rozdolski noted that since the positions were first approved on August 1, 2023, staff has already started onboarding some permit representatives and inspector and plan review positions have been posted. In addition to that, staff is bringing back some recently retired employees to help out Plan Review and Inspections. The recently retired employees have agreed to work on a temporary, part-time basis.

Mr. Lyons felt the \$800,000 sounded like a large number since there are only a couple of months left in this fiscal year.

Ms. Richards explained that the \$800,000 includes trucks and computers. When a new employee starts, they need computer equipment (i.e. monitors/keyboards, etc.), memberships and Accela licenses. All new employees need access to Accela. Ms. Richards noted that \$270,000 of the \$800,000 is for trucks alone.

Mr. Delnay stated it has been difficult to find vehicles that staff can use.

Ms. Rozdolski concurred, but noted she had been in contact with the Fleet Director who will be providing Community Development Staff with six vehicles within the next two weeks. She noted that staff was pleased to have additional vehicles because some of the current vehicles are in poor shape.

Mr. Delnay stated it was to the point that the trucks are not reliable transportation.

Per a request by Mr. Gabor, Mr. Delnay gave an overview of some staffing increases soon to come. He explained the following: 1) The County has created a temporary position category. A total of four plan reviewers and one inspector are being hired on a temporary basis. 2) Six new plan reviewer positions and six new inspector positions have been created. Out of the six inspector positions, three are going to be structural. 3) There is currently a roofing division, but staff is going to combine that division with the structural section. This means three more structural inspectors will be helping with the pending roof permits, which is the biggest backlog at the moment. Everything else, inspection wise, is performed by the next day. 4) There are currently three structural positions in addition to the three that have been added. 5) staff conducted interviews on Monday, August 7, 2023. Out of the three interviewed, two were given an offer of employment. 6) On Monday, August 14, 2023, staff will be conducting three more interviews. Staff anticipates filling these positions as soon as possible. 7) Part of the goal of adding the additional positions on the inspection and plan review side is to keep the supervisors from performing as many plan reviews or inspections, but instead monitoring staff to make sure that everyone is reviewing and inspecting to the same level in an effort to achieve consistency.

Mr. Lyons noted that the data shows permits have slowed down in July. He asked if staff anticipated that trend continuing into future months.

Mr. McNulty stated that historically permits slow down during the summer.

Mr. Lyons asked what the turnaround times was for permits.

Mr. McNulty stated that currently it is at 94 days.

Mr. Wojcechowkyj asked if that was an average.

Mr. McNulty stated it was an average for the month of July.

Steve Wojcechowkyj stated permits submitted by his company are over the 94 day threshold.

Mr. McNulty stated that at the end of June, there were 3,800 permits waiting to be processed. Permitting staff has completed the intake of those 3,800 permits. This will not be reflected until the October report. Mr. McNulty stated that even though it shows that the average turnaround time on permits is 94 days, it is typically less time than that.

Mr. Wojcechowkyj stated his company's permits are averaging 120 to 150 days.

Mr. McNulty stated they would be seeing those numbers begin to reduce.

Mr. Gabor asked if the review process is anticipated to increase since the intake is improving.

Mr. McNulty stated that technically the numbers have gone down from the previous month even though the numbers do not reflect that yet. The current data is not reflecting the actual scenario because 80% of the permits processed for intake go to Plan Review next. This means that 80% of the 3,800 permits are now in the Plan Review queue. The temporary positions mentioned by Mr. Delnay will help to offset the backlog in Plan Review.

Ms. Rozdolski stated that some responsibilities that were being handled by Plan Review staff have been shifted to some of the permitting staff so that the Plan Review staff can focus on plan review only. It will provide some relief to the Plan Review staff.

Mr. Johnson noted this data only related to residential. He asked about the commercial data.

Mr. McNulty stated the commercial data is similar to the residential data, but staff is having difficulty coming up with a similar layout to display the commercial data because of all the staff involved in the reviews. The same occurs with the Development Order cases. However, Christy Barker is continuing to work on it.

Ms. Rozdolski asked if there was something specific that Mr. Johnson was looking for.

Mr. Johnson stated he did not have any issue with Lee County, but he was interested in seeing the data going into next year. He noted that the fire reviews were the primary issue/delay at this time. He noted that six permits had been submitted for Lee Health last week that might get delayed due to the fire reviews since the fire reviews are the largest delay his company is experiencing with the Lee County permitting process. However, possibly the County could push some clients to the top, such as Lee Health. Mr. Johnson noted that he was informed by Lee Health representatives that they will be submitting many applications in 2024 for mechanical work and roofs, as well as upgrading all of their outpatient care infrastructure. As a result of this, he was trying to forecast how long it will take to get a permit issued.

Mr. McNulty stated that, generally speaking, the bottom total averages for residential permits shown on the data sheets is a good thermometer for the commercial projects as well. He noted that the Plan Review supervisors are trying to keep the review times down on a daily basis and they are trying not to let the commercial review times get too far ahead or behind.

Mr. Lyons asked what the status was for next year's budget.

Ms. Richards stated the Board of County Commissioners' first budget hearing is scheduled for September.

Mr. Lyons stated the Building Industry Oversight Committee (BIOC) should be able to get an update on that during their October meeting because the budget should be approved by then.

Mr. Gabor asked if staff could share the outcome of the budget hearings prior to the next meeting of the BIOC.

Ms. Richards stated she would make a note to send the BIOC a draft as soon as it is available.

Mr. Gabor asked if there was anything his company could do to make the permitting process more efficient. He noted that his company was submitting approximately 200 permits per month. He noted they build the same plans repeatedly. He offered to provide a list of the permit numbers. He asked if that would be beneficial to the reviewer to speed up their reviews since they are reviewing the same plans for each permit.

Mr. Delnay stated this is currently already taking place where a reviewer is being given the permits that have the same model. One enhancement could be for their representatives to contact other staff instead the reviewer directly for a status. Every time the reviewer is contacted, they must stop what they are doing to look into it. Staff prefers that the representatives contact alternative staff such as: Tad Delnay, Audra Ennis, Linda Ramsey, Randy Simes, or Andrew Nielsen. However, he noted that staff has to be equitable with everyone, not just specific applicants.

Mr. Gabor stated his company is open to ideas because they want to find the best way to communicate in order to make things run more efficiently. He also noted that his company is willing to meet with staff to work towards coming up with a better process.

Mr. McNulty stated that having the models helps new employees learn the computer system and processes. They get practice with data entry because they are adding the same square footage and data points that are collected during the Plan Review process. It helps them learn the system faster.

Mr. Delnay stated that the last time they received a list of priority projects from Mr. Gabor's firm, it was extensive. Although staff is trying to work on the ones listed as "priority," they must be equitable with other applicants as well.

Ms. Ennis concurred that staff was provided with an extensive list. There were other notations made on the list regarding the permits that are not as much of a priority. Ms. Ennis stated staff prefers to receive one condensed list with the projects that are priority with the corresponding model number on them to help staff monitor them. Other information that does not pertain to the priority projects can be left off the list.

Other Business

Mr. Gabor announced that Mr. McNulty was leaving Lee County to take a job in Charlotte County.

Mr. McNulty stated today's meeting would be his last. His last day with Lee County is August 23, 2023 and his first day in Charlotte County will be August 24, 2023.

Mr. Lyons thanked Mr. McNulty for all of his work with the BIOC.

Mr. McNulty stated he enjoyed the relationship the County has with the industry and this Committee and the BIA as well stating he always felt it was very productive.

Mr. Gabor stated the Committee appreciates all of his efforts and acknowledged that Mr. McNulty had made significant contributions to Lee County within the past 10-15 years. He noted that the collaboration between this Committee and the County has been a great partnership that he was certain would be continued with Mr. Delnay. He offered assistance to Mr. McNulty with Charlotte County's processes because his company wants that type of collaboration.

Mr. Delnay assured the Committee that Mr. McNulty had been a great mentor/teacher as well as a great interpreter of the Code. He noted that no drastic changes were anticipated. Staff will continue proceeding as they have been. They will make improvements where and when possible. It will be mainly status quo.

Ms. Rozdolski noted that Mr. McNulty had left staff a list of projects that were on hold because there has currently been no resources to implement them. However, additional staff is being put in place in order to make those projects possible.

Adjournment

Mr. Lyons made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wojcechowkyj. The motion was called and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:08 a.m.